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February 27, 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Highlights of Symington Subcommittee Session on  
Korea (2), February 25, 1970

DISTRIBUTION:

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S/S

EA

- Ambassador Green

- Ambassador Brown

- Mr. Moore

EA/K

- Mr. Peters

L/EA

- Mr. Futterman

PM

- Mr. Spiers

PM/JW

- Mr. Wolf

S/PC

- Mr. Cargo

- Mr. Armacost

- Mr. Seligmann

H

- Ambassador Torbert

WH

- Mr. Ehrlichman

NSC

- Mr. Lehman

DOD

- Mr. French

- Mr. Knauer

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In addition to Senators Symington and Fulbright who  
were present throughout most of the morning session,  
Senators Gore, Case, and Javits made brief appearances.

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Counsel began by inquiring into the reasons behind the specific agreement of May 26, 1961, which placed ROK forces under CINCUNC. Ambassador Porter explained that during the period of the coup, ROK forces had been withdrawn from the UN command to defend the Capitol and had not responded to CINCUNC direction. Consequently it was thought desirable to reaffirm CINCUNC operational control over ROK forces and to clarify the procedures through which units could be temporarily withdrawn. General Michaelis defined those procedures, indicating that units could be removed from CINCUNC direction temporarily to deal with emergencies, e.g. fires and floods, on the basis of written requests approved by CINCUNC.

In response to further inquiries General Michaelis made clear the fact while he exercises operational control, ROKG has administrative and logistic responsibility for ROK forces. The operational control of CINCUNC, he added, has at no time been challenged since 1961. General Michaelis indicated that the retention of CINCUNC, by preserving our operational command over the ROK forces, enables us to exercise some restraint upon commanders tempted to authorize reprisals against North Korea.

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Senator Symington asked cryptically why we should wish to impose such restraints upon South Korea -- a theme to which he referred several times during the morning.

Senator Fulbright inquired about ROK infiltration, reprisals, and para-military activity in North Korea.

Ambassador Porter indicated that the ROK's had undertaken nothing as provocative as the 1968 Blue House raid; that they had not infiltrated men into North Korea as a matter of policy, and that the ROKG is fully aware that raids of any scope or consequence require consultation with the U.S. In response to further questioning on the frequency of ROK reprisals, General Michaelis indicated knowledge of one naval excursion that proved disastrous for the ROK's. Ambassador Brown recalled another incident.

Counsel asked about the comparability of the U.S.-ROK treaty and the bilateral Mutual Security Agreement between North Korea and Russia and China. Ambassador Porter indicated that while the treaties between the Communist states appeared to include a more definitive commitment, we do not know what precise meaning they attach to various critical phases in those treaties. He indicated, moreover, that while the Russians occasionally reaffirm

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publicly their bonds of friendship with North Korea, normally such declarations have been framed in general terms.

Counsel then asked what U.S. interests were served by our commitment to South Korea. Ambassador Porter referred in his answer to our historical experience in the Korean war; the importance of reassuring a stout ally, the South Koreans; and the significance of upholding the 1954 treaty in order to sustain the confidence of other peoples in Asia in the value of our word.

Senator Symington injected a long soliloquy on U.S. actions which have allegedly "split" various countries, and asked whether the State Department intended to "split" any other countries. This fishing expedition in which Senator Fulbright joined evoked a restrained response from Ambassador Porter who gingerly reminded the Senators that the division of Germany, Korea, Vietnam, and China was the result of historical circumstances and the actions of other third parties rather than the product of a United States design.

A number of questions focussed upon the relative military strength of North and South Korea. Senators Fulbright and Symington wondered, in view of the fact of the evident

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superiority of South Korea in terms of population, GNP, and the size of its armed forces, why they appear unable to defend themselves without the continued deployment of large American forces. Why, Senator Symington asked, can't we "give them the stuff and let them do the job."

General Michaelis explained that the North Koreans possess a superiority in air power vis-a-vis the ROK. As the offensive power, he added, they enjoy the advantages of the initiative. We are not inclined to provide the ROK superior air power for fear they might assume the offensive. Senator Symington appeared to think this would not be a bad idea. General Michaelis indicated, however, that neither North or South Korea could long sustain operations without logistic support from their allies. Consequently, any major hostility might provoke a dangerous great power confrontation. In response to further questions General Michaelis indicated that ROK forces could probably handle North Korea if there was some further modernization of their armed forces, with particular emphasis upon improved mobility.

Ambassador Porter assured the committee that the South Koreans were already undertaking a larger share of the burdens

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of defense by "Koreanizing the DMZ." In response to Symington's question as to whether we might remove one division, Ambassador Porter stated that the question of troop reductions was currently under review in the Department but that the outcome of this review could not as yet be anticipated.

Senator Fulbright asked whether we could avoid the prospect of involvement in hostilities in Korea by revoking the treaty. Ambassador Brown stated that were we to do so, we might offer considerable temptation to Kim Il Sung to attempt the achievement of his objectives by force.

Senator Fulbright then attempted to widen the scope of inquiry into broad questions of U.S. interests in the Far East. There was little disposition on the part of the witnesses and other Senators to stray so widely from the subject matter of these hearings.

Counsel asked a number of questions about North and South Korean order of battle figures, comparability of manpower, firepower, ratio of logistic combat forces, U.S. naval deployments in the Korean area, and numbers of U.S. aircraft deployed in Korea.

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Counsel then asked what South Korea wanted to do at the time of the Pueblo, Blue House, and EC-121 incidents. Ambassador Porter indicated that in the aftermath of those crises, the ROKG requested the additional modernization of their armed forces. Asked by Counsel whether the South Koreans were anxious at that time to retaliate, Ambassador Porter stated that the South Koreans had expressed anxiety that consultative procedures might take too much time in future emergencies. He added that the ROKG had not offered any assurances that they themselves would not retaliate in future emergencies, but that they did assure us that they would consult us in advance.

Counsel then inquired as to measures that had been taken to counter North Korean infiltration across the DMZ and along the coast line. These measures were described in detail by General Cagwin and General Michaelis. General Michaelis indicated that the North Korean objective seems now to have shifted from the infiltration of intelligence agents, terrorists, assassins, etc., to the infiltration of sophisticated and well-trained political cadre. Counsel asked why the infiltration seemed most extensive in the American sector of the DMZ. Ambassador Porter

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indicated that the U.S. had, of course, been a special target of the North Koreans over the years; that any incidents which occurred in the American Sector of the DMZ, however inconsequential, were widely reported; and that one could not be sure of the reliability with which incidents were reported on other sectors of the demilitarized zone.

Afternoon Session

Senator Symington opened the hearings and immediately left. Counsel continued the questioning for the record, asking first a series of questions about American involvement in ROK counter infiltration activities. General Michaelis explained that the U.S. had played no practical role in counter infiltration activities.

Counsel then inquired about the role of military forces in Korea. General Michaelis explained that the substantial American military presence serves as a useful deterrent to North Korea, a source of reassurance to the South Korean people, and occasionally a source of restraint upon the South Korean Government with respect to reprisals for North Korean provocations. Ambassador Brown added that without a large and visible military presence we could not maintain

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operational control over ROK forces. Counsel asked whether we could continue to perform these functions with a smaller MAAG and reduced force levels. Ambassador Porter indicated that our capacity to do so would be contingent upon other actions and the scope and manner of any force reductions.

Counsel inquired as to how the ROK could regain operational control over their forces. General Michaelis explained that a letter of request from the Minister of Defense would be sufficient to recover control. Counsel inquired as to whether we talk privately with the North Koreans. Ambassador Porter explained that we have dealt directly with the North Koreans during the Pueblo crisis. On such occasions, however, we have informed the ROKG fully and frankly on the progress of the talks.

Counsel then asked a series of questions on the internal situation in South Korea, e.g. the extent of corruption, the functions of the South Korean Central Intelligence Agency, and the degree of student discontent.

He then turned to the Military Assistance Program. General Taylor explained that one of our major problems is that virtually all of our MAP funds are committed to operations and maintenance. Thus MAP provides no leverage or subsidy for the modernization of ROK forces.

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There was some discussion of the quality of equipment available to ROK forces in Korea as compared to that used by South Koreans fighting in Vietnam. ROK forces in Vietnam, for example, are equipped with M-16's while the forces in Korea use M-1's. General Michaelis said that there is a plan to establish an M-16 production plant in South Korea. He seemed to acknowledge that much South Korean equipment is obsolescent or obsolete.

Counsel then asked about the magnitude of American POL and ammunition stores maintained in Korea, about the defensive and offensive capabilities of F-4 and F-5 aircraft, the rationale for a South Korean marine division, and the percentage of ROK budgetary expenses devoted to defense spending

In response to Counsel's questions about the organization of MAAG, General Michaelis explained the rationale for the two-tiered system in which PROVMAAG handles management functions while leaving the service units (K-MAAG) intact. The system had evolved historically and the creation of a consolidated JUSMAAG is now under study. The implication of most of Counsel's questions was that the size of MAAG is exorbitant.

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Counsel asked whether South Korea was willing to accept military assistance from Japan. Ambassador Porter said that we had at one time approached the ROK Government about receiving from Japan non-lethal military items for their police, but had found the ROKG unresponsive.

Counsel then raised a number of questions about U.S. facilities and forces. He was especially interested in the ratio between U.S. combat and support personnel, the reasons for the deployment of American forces directly north of Seoul, and why we consider it necessary to maintain 2 divisions in Korea. Ambassador Porter explained that after the Korean war we scaled down our forces by 1955 to the point where only 2 divisions remained. Force levels have remained relatively constant since that time. One division is deployed along the DMZ and one is in reserve. Our forces were deployed north of Seoul in 1953 and have remained there ever since. They block the most logical route for North Korean invasion. They have not been moved because re-deployment would mean the construction of a new base complex whose cost is estimated at \$100 million.

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Counsel then inquired about rotation patterns for troops on the line. In effect he was asking whether American forces might be somewhat reduced and deployed away from the front lines. He asked if there was any political necessity for us to keep forces on the line. Ambassador Porter replied that the important point is that our presence remain visible, for it is the visibility of our presence that helps deter North Korean armed attack, and reassures the South Korean Government and people of the constancy of our support.

Counsel asked about Korean expectations regarding the continuance of our present force level in Korea. Ambassador Porter indicated that their concern is that a reduction of our forces not be executed precipitately, that it not occur without prior consultations, and that it not be undertaken without the prior modernization of ROK forces.

Counsel inquired as to the preferred way of affecting troop reductions, i.e., withdrawal of an entire division or the withdrawal of bits and pieces of various units. General Michaelis indicated that if we decided to reduce forces he would prefer to be given a figure on the number to be withdrawn and permitted discretion to determine where to make the cuts.

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